

THE MISSOURI REPUBLICAN

Concealed Weapons.

We suppose it is practically impossible, by any legislative enactment, to entirely abolish the practice of carrying concealed weapons, but we sincerely wish there were a law whereby every person guilty of that practice—who has not given his reasons therefor, and obtained permission from the proper authorities—could be sent to the penitentiary for twelve months. Four-fifths of the homicides which now occur would not transpire at all, if men were thoroughly convinced that the carrying of fire-arms and daggers would lead to certain and severe punishment. It is entirely safe to say that not one murder in ten is committed in cold blood; all but a comparatively small proportion are done in the heat of passion, and done, too, simply because the murderer happens to have the instrument of death close at hand. (Nearly all of those real or fancied wrongs which now obtain such swift and sharp retaliation, could be explained or apologized for if sufficient time were allowed; but the wronged party is not disposed to wait when the means of reparation are already in his grasp, and so shoots or stabs on the slightest provocation.)

The latest murder in New York is a case at point. We have no idea that KING intended killing O'NEIL when he went to the court-room, or that he was satisfied with himself after the consummation of the terrible deed. Provoked by testimony which seriously damaged his cause before the legal tribunal, he simply acted on the spur of the moment, and snatching a pistol from his pocket, slew the man whose only offence was that he had answered the summons of the court and told his story from the witness box. Had KING been compelled to delay an hour in order to obtain a pistol, he would, in all human probability, never have killed O'NEIL.

This is but one out of thousands of similar cases which occur so frequently as hardly to attract a passing notice. The evil is patent, but how shall it be cured? Laws are powerless to put a stop to a fashion which breeds such dire consequences, but public sentiment, if declared with emphasis and promptly enforced by suitable social edicts, may perhaps accomplish this most desirable reformation. In a civilized country, and more especially in cities, towns and villages where the officers of the law afford all requisite protection to life and property, a man has no more business with pistol or knife than with a war club or battle-axe. He may go about his usual avocations daily for twenty years, and never require any of the machinery of so-called "self defence." More than this, he is scarcely liable to be involved in any grave personal quarrel, for the very fact that he is himself defenceless, will naturally prevent his pushing an altercation beyond legitimate limits. It is the persons who are always prepared for fighting who are always quarrelling, and most of the rencounters which disgrace modern American society occur between parties who have the unenviable reputation of being ready to "shoot on sight."

Duelling was banished into the domain of common crime because of its senseless barbarity, but duelling is the height of refined wisdom compared with the shooting and stabbing affairs which now abound. The man shot in a duel had at least the consolation of knowing why he was shot, and an opportunity to return the compliment. The bloody work was done under well-defined regulations, and there was a sort of decency about it which rendered it from utter contempt. But what decency, what order, what manhood is there in the present method of settling difficulties? The Indian of the plains is as civilized as we are in this respect.

Let every good citizen do his share, by precept and example, in putting an effectual quietus upon a practice which is at once so foolish and so wicked. Let the man who habitually carries a concealed weapon be regarded and treated as a cowardly ruffian, and let it be understood that those walking arsenals have no right to call themselves gentlemen, and should be shunned by all honest and law-abiding people. The ban of social outlawry can effect more in this direction than legal pains and penalties.